



## LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Henry J. Mroz Central Administration Offices  
155 Merrimack Street  
Lowell, MA 01852

Jeannine Durkin  
Acting Superintendent

### Memorandum

Tel: 978-674-4324  
Fax: 978-937-7609  
email: [jdurkin@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:jdurkin@lowell.k12.ma.us)

To: Members of the Policy Subcommittee  
Gerry Nutter, Chairperson  
Jackie Doherty, Member  
Connie Martin, Member  
Jim Hall, Administrator Representative

From: Jeannine Durkin, Acting Superintendent of Schools  
Date: March 4, 2019  
Ref: Meeting Notice

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The Chair of the Policy Subcommittee has requested that a meeting be held.

**Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2019**  
**Place: City Hall- City Council Chambers**  
**Time: 5:30 PM**

#### **Agenda**

The Purpose of this meeting is to review the following:

- Policy on Service Animals
- Time Allowed for Speakers under Public Participation

xc: City Clerk  
Jeannine M. Durkin, Acting Superintendent  
Gerry Nutter, Chairperson  
Jim Hall, Adm. Representative  
Jackie Doherty, Member  
Connie Martin, Member  
Mary Sheehan, Recorder  
Wendy Blom, LTC



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James P. Hall  
Attorney

Tel: 978-674-4324  
Fax: 978-937-7609  
E-Mail: [jhall@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:jhall@lowell.k12.ma.us)

To: Superintendent Jeannine M. Durkin  
From: Attorney James P. Hall  
Date: January 30, 2019

I have reviewed the law related to service animals in schools. I have also reviewed several policies from other school districts. I recommend that the Lowell School Committee consider adopting a policy related to the presence of animals on school property. Such a policy will help school leaders appropriately address such requests in an appropriate manner when such issues are presented. While the Committee as a whole could review, discuss, and adopt a policy; I recommend first referring this matter to a subcommittee so that the issue can be further explored and so that input from the community can be considered.

For the Committee's consideration, the policy attached as Exhibit A was produced by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and was adopted by the North Middlesex Regional School District. The policy attached as Exhibit B was adopted by the Burlington School Committee and was also developed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. I have also enclosed guidance from the Department of Health: "Animals in Schools: Recommendations for Schools" (Exhibit C) which talks of some of the risks of animals in classrooms which must be addressed and managed.

## **ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

The Lowell School Committee is committed to providing a high quality educational program for all students and employees in a safe and healthy environment. No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building principal.

School principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Massachusetts Department of Public Health publication "Animals in the Classroom: Recommendations for Schools" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the principal shall be final.

### **Educational Program**

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the building principal provided student health and safety is not jeopardized. The individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to "Animals in the Classroom: Recommendations for Schools" and any other conditions established by the principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

### **Student Health**

The health and well-being of students are the District's highest priorities. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have his/her health impaired nor less than fall access to available educational opportunities.

### **Conditions for Allowing Animals in School**

In an effort to reduce the chances of transmitting rabies and other zoonotic diseases (those transmitted from animals to people) to staff and students, the following conditions must be met before allowing animals in the classroom:

- The principal of the building must approve all animals to be brought into the classroom.
- The animal (to be brought in) must have an educational purpose.
- The animal must be free of diseases and if applicable have a rabies certification.
- The animal must not be a wild or stray animal (dead or alive) unless under the control of a licensed professional.
- The animal must not be poisonous.
- Where appropriate, the source of the animal should be from a licensed professional company with certification of health.

### Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Dogs)

The School Committee does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. The district will comply with Massachusetts and federal law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance dogs and will permit such animals on school premises and school transportation.

For purposes of this policy, a service animal "includes any dog that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability." The regulations further state that "a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability."

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as "seeing eye dogs" or "guide dogs";
- alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments; and,
- assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance.

The district shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner or person having custody and control of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc.

If in the opinion of the school principal or authorized designee, any service animal is not under the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school. The parent/guardian of the student having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from district premises immediately.

If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by the building principal or designee. An alternative plan will be developed with appropriate district staff. Such plan could include the reassignment of the person having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This procedure will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, district, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardians of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other district facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent/guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal, will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The superintendent of schools or her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use or an employee's use of an assistance animal in district facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

SOURCE: MASC February 2011

Cross Ref: Latest revision of Ma DOH publication: "Animals in the Classroom: Recommendations for Schools"

**Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Dogs) in Schools**

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reassignment of the person having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, District, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other District facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent or guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of an assistance dog in District facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

SOURCE: MASC February 2011

*Adopted by Burlington School Committee: 3/10/11*



MITT ROMNEY  
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

RONALD PRESTON  
SECRETARY

CHRISTINE C. FERGUSON  
COMMISSIONER

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
State Laboratory Institute  
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
(617) 983-6800

## ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

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### PURPOSE

To reduce human exposures to rabies and other zoonotic diseases (those transmitted from animals to people) in school classrooms.

### INTRODUCTION

Animals can be effective teaching aids and the positive benefits of the human-animal bond are well-established. However, animals in the classroom necessitate certain safeguards.

Animals may carry parasites, bacteria and other potentially infectious organisms that can be transmitted to people. Diseases that can be transmitted from animals to people are called zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases can be spread by direct contact with an infected animal or its feces, through insects that bite or live on animals, and from contact with organisms that live in the environment where an animal lives. Certain groups of people may be more susceptible to zoonotic diseases, including infants, children, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

### DESCRIPTION OF ZOOONOTIC DISEASES AND GENERAL GUIDELINES

**Enteric diseases** (diseases predominantly of the digestive system) include illnesses caused by organisms such as *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Giardia*. Enteric disease organisms primarily cause diarrhea in people, but in some cases, can infect the blood and cause life-threatening illness. People can be exposed to these enteric organisms by eating food contaminated with feces, or by touching a contaminated object and then touching one's mouth. Animals can carry these organisms without being ill.

Because of the high risk of salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis from baby chicks and ducks, these animals are inappropriate in schools. Transmission of these diseases from chicks and ducklings to children is well-documented.

Because of the risk of contracting salmonellosis from reptiles (including non-poisonous snakes, lizards, and iguanas) and amphibians, even when reared in captivity, special precautions are necessary when handling them. These animals may intermittently shed salmonella, and negative cultures will not guarantee that the animals are not infected. Treatment of infected animals with antibiotics has not proven useful and may promote the development and spread of resistant bacteria. Because salmonellosis can be more severe in



young children and because their hygiene practices are less thorough, handling of reptiles and amphibians by young children is not recommended.

In order to prevent the transmission of enteric disease-causing organisms, students should receive very clear instructions on how to wash their hands thoroughly after handling animals, their cages, or surfaces animals have come in contact with, and always before eating.

**Psittacosis** is a bacterial disease that can cause fever, chills, rash, and pneumonia. This disease is primarily transmitted through inhaling dust from the contaminated droppings of infected birds. The elderly and those with a weakened immune system may develop more serious forms of this illness. Because psittacine birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels) can carry psittacosis, these birds should not be handled by children. Birds showing any signs of illness should not be brought into school. Psittacine birds may be brought to school as long as they are kept caged, their cages are clean and the bird's wastes are frequently and safely removed and discarded.

**Rabies** is a fatal, viral infection of certain wild and domestic animals. Rabies can infect any mammal, but it is more common among certain mammals like raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. Rabies can be spread to domestic animals and to humans through contact with an infected animal's saliva, usually through a bite or scratch, or through contact with nervous tissues (brain and spinal cord) of infected animals. In people, rabies virus causes an infection of the brain, which is always fatal in those who are infected and do not receive protective treatment after an exposure. Rabies is rare among small rodents like squirrels, rats, hamsters and mice. Fish, reptiles (such as snakes, turtles and lizards), amphibians (such as frogs and salamanders) and insects cannot get or spread rabies.

Wild mammals pose a risk for transmitting rabies and should never be brought into schools or handled by children. Wild animals' behavior tends to be unpredictable. A wild mammal that has been raised in captivity is still a wild animal. Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, skunks, raccoons, groundhogs (woodchucks), and wild carnivores (e.g. coyotes and foxes), these animals (including recently dead animals) should not be permitted on school grounds unless they are under the control of a licensed professional responsible for preventing exposures to students and staff. It is against the law to keep or transport wild animals without authorization from the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Stray domestic animals also pose a risk for transmitting rabies because the health and vaccination status of these animals is unknown. Therefore, stray animals should never be brought into classrooms or onto school grounds.

As a general rule, only domesticated mammals with current rabies vaccinations and for which USDA-approved vaccines exist should be permitted to have contact with students. Currently, USDA-approved vaccines exist for the following domesticated animals *only*: dogs, cats, ferrets, cattle, horses, and sheep. Students should be educated on safe and proper handling procedures before handling or touching these animals. Current rabies vaccination by a licensed veterinarian should be documented for all dogs, cats, and ferrets brought onto the school campus for instructional purposes. Dogs and cats under three months of age (too young to be vaccinated for rabies) or not vaccinated against rabies should not be brought into classrooms or onto school grounds without taking precautions to prevent exposures.

In October 2003, a pet guinea pig tested positive for rabies in New York State. The guinea pig was infected with rabies during a brief encounter with a raccoon while the owner took the animal outdoors for fresh air and allowed the animal to roam free. This episode serves as a reminder that although small rodents are considered to be at low risk for rabies, all mammals are susceptible to rabies infection. Students who volunteer to foster classroom pets, especially mammals, during school vacations and summer should keep the animals exclusively indoors in order to prevent interaction with wild animals that may be infected with rabies.

If a student has been exposed to the saliva or nervous tissue of a wild or stray mammal (including recently dead animals), the wound or area of skin contact should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 10 minutes. The student's parents or guardians should be notified and told to contact their child's pediatrician for evaluation. The local board of health should also be notified; they will help coordinate any follow-up by the town animal control officer or animal inspector, including quarantine of the animal (if appropriate), and can help determine if the person needs to be treated for rabies. The local board of health will also coordinate submission of the animal to the State Laboratory Institute/Rabies Laboratory for testing, if appropriate.

## **EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL-RELATED RABIES SITUATIONS**

The following are specific instances where students or teachers brought animals that are generally unacceptable for classroom settings (because of their risk of transmitting rabies and other zoonotic diseases) into Massachusetts' schools:

- A teacher brought a coyote that was found dead on the side of the road onto school property in order to show his students how to skin the animal. The coyote was later submitted to the State Laboratory Institute/Rabies Laboratory for testing but was found to be unsatisfactory for testing, as rabies could not be ruled out. Several students had contact with the dead animal and received post-exposure treatment for rabies.
- A student brought a dead bat into school to use for "show and tell". The bat was submitted to the State Laboratory Institute/Rabies Laboratory by the school principal but was unsatisfactory for testing. Three children had contact with the bat and received post-exposure treatment for rabies.

While animals can be submitted to the State Laboratory Institute for testing for rabies, many times animals are not available or yield unsatisfactory results because the condition of the brain is not suitable for testing. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) must consider animals that test unsatisfactory as rabid.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is important that animals that are brought onto school campuses be clean and healthy so that the risk of transmitting diseases is minimal. Children are often more susceptible to exposure to zoonotic diseases and parasitic infections than adults because of their lack of handwashing and greater propensity for putting hands in their mouths. Therefore, animals which are brought to school should be clean and free of disease and external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites, to decrease the likelihood of the animal transmitting these agents or vectors to the students. Schools should consider developing standard procedures for bringing animals into classrooms, for fostering classroom pets to students during school vacations, and for responding to bites, other exposures, and reports of illness following contact with an animal.

If questions arise concerning human contact with animals that may carry zoonotic diseases, call the MDPH's Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at **(617) 983-6800**. For emergencies, an epidemiologist can be reached after hours and on weekends through this number.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON ZOOONOTIC DISEASES**

**MDPH website:** [www.state.ma.us/dph](http://www.state.ma.us/dph)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:** <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.htm>

Acknowledgement: This document was adapted from guidelines developed by the Kansas Department of Health

## **ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

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The Lowell Public School District is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

### **Education Program**

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the building Principal provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the Principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

### **Student Health**

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### **Animals Prohibited from School**

Rabies is a growing problem and any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based on the Massachusetts Departments of Health and Education recommendations the following animals are prohibited from schools within the Lowell Public School District.

**Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals** – Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores, these animals should not be permitted in school building under any circumstances (including dead animals).

**Fur-Bearing Animals** (pet dogs, \*cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.,) – These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other disease and injuries.

**Bats**- Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

**Poisonous Animals**- Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

**\*Exception: Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs or Law Enforcement Dogs** – These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

Exceptions may be made with the prior approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

### **Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Dogs)**

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For purposes of this policy, a “service animal includes any dog that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.” The regulations further state that “a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability.”

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having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, District, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other District facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent or guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of an assistance animal in District facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

**2010 title II ADA: 28 CFR Part 25**

**Adopted at the School Committee Meeting of August 17, 2011**